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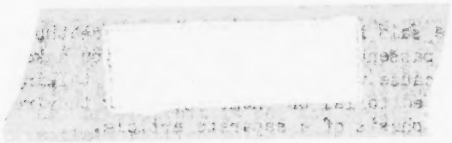

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Subscription rates for the Twentieth Century Railroad Club's newsletter, THE FAST MAIL, are still at a VERY reasonable $2.25 for one year/12 issues BUT will soon be raised to a reasonable $2.75. (HINT!) The Fast Mail, 10700 S. Seeley Ave., Chicago, IL, 60643. Checks payable to The Twentieth Century Railroad Club.

CONSISTS WANTED. I will trade Los Angeles area consists for consists of trains operating to/from Chicago.
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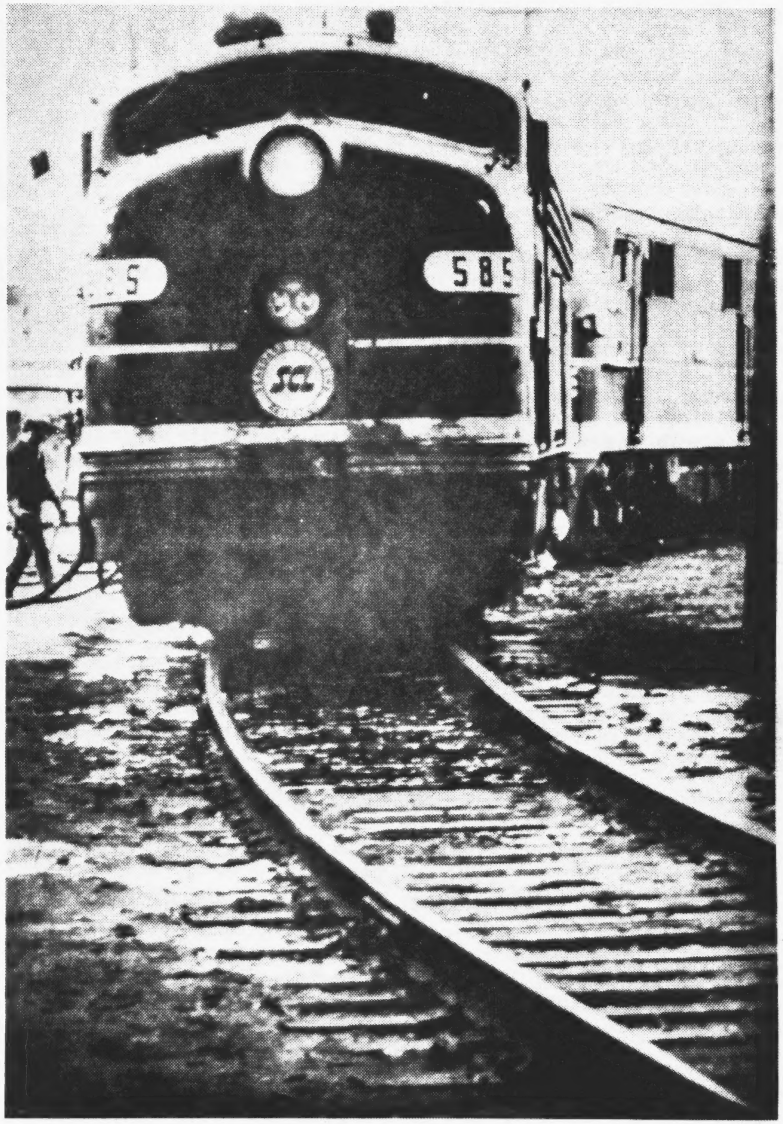
RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

Vol. 2 No. 8
April 17, 1972

#34



ON THE COVER: This dramatic shot of Amtrak's SILVER STAR is from a portion of a color slide by East Coast Photographer Doug Ellis. The train is posing (last March) under a viaduct at Broad St. Station, Richmond, Va. It was heading south, but all trains run thru there in the same direction. The SILVER STAR is subject of an important schedule change discussed in Steve Farrar's East Coast Report in this issue.

DON'T MISS the next, May 1, issue of RTN—our special Amtrak First Anniversary issue.

ICC REGULATIONS: AMTRAK'S SIDE OF THE STORY

(In the last issue we presented two divergent editorial viewpoints concerning the Interstate Commerce Commission's proposed passenger train regulations. Now here is Amtrak's view, as given by an Amtrak spokesman to RTN:)

"The fact that Amtrak has resisted the imposition of regulatory requirements that would hamstring it—and indeed ruin it—should not in my judgment be taken as a reflection upon its desire to improve rail passenger service. Of course our Initial Statement in the case was negative; we are opposed to the regulations! This hardly means that those of us who have made a career commitment to Amtrak are negative about it or opposed to good service. While human nature is such that our best friends are frequently our harshest critics, I would hope that our friends at least would not fail to make this distinction.

"... The excellent United Air Lines reservations system that you point to as an example of what we should be doing does not comply with the ICC's proposed regulations which we opposed in our Initial Statement. The UAL system represents literally thousands of man-years of effort over a period of a decade by a corporation that grosses almost $2 billion and operates at a profit. Amtrak has been in operation less than a year, has less than 10% of UAL's gross, and, as you note, is badly underfunded. Given a fair opportunity, I really don't think our efforts will compare as badly as you seem to think. However, they will be our efforts suited to rail service, and not something dreamed up in a regulation which fails to recognize the nature of the reservations process, marketing priorities, or computer and advanced communications technology.

"I would ask you to go back and read the ICC's proposed regulations again in detail as though you were running Amtrak and had to comply with every detail every day on 214 trains in 43 states and over 350 localities, each with its own problems, under a potential penalty of $500 per 'violation.' Remember that you, not the ICC, are solely responsible for turning around an enterprise that is losing substantial amounts without the burden of these regulations, and you have your own ideas and priorities as to how this should be done. Viewed in this light, I think you would see the regulations as an unwarranted interference with your efforts to do the already tough (some would say impossible) job you are responsible for. In short, I think you would react just as Amtrak did in the circumstances."

Amtrak
takes you
to all the
best places

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Published twice monthly, on the 1st and 3rd Mondays, by Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley, Calif. 94709. Subscription $6 a year; 25¢ a copy.
STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large; Richard Tower, Research Editor; Steve Farrar, East Coast Editor; John ("Doug") Ellis, East Coast Photographer.
Projected mailing date for this issue: April 26.

SUMMER SCHEDULE CHANGES FOR AMTRAK

by Steve Farrar and Jim Russell

Just as we went to press with the last issue, Amtrak issued a press release (April 14) announcing the April 30 and June 11 schedule changes. In addition to the changes we reported last time, Amtrak has now definitely announced major service alterations for the summer, primarily in the West.

The CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO will begin daily, rather than tri-weekly, operation June 11. At the same time, the COAST STARLIGHT will go on a daily schedule. The two Portland-Seattle local trains, the PUGET SOUND and the MOUNT RAINIER, will be dropped because of low patronage. The schedule of the CITY OF SF will be shortened by about an hour (the present schedule is well-padded, and the train habitually arrives in Oakland 30mins early).

Santa Fe's CHIEF will be revived June 11 to run daily Los Angeles to Chicago in addition to the SUPER CHIEF/EL CAPITAN. It will leave Chicago in early morning and arrive Los Angeles the second evening; will leave L.A. in early afternoon and arrive Chicago early morning. For the first time since 1958, daily thru sleeper and coach service between Los Angeles and New York will operate using this train between Kansas City and L.A., with cars being carried on the NATIONAL LIMITED from New York. Eastbound, the SUPER CHIEF will carry thru cars that will connect with the NATIONAL LTD at Kansas City.

The TEXAS CHIEF will leave Chicago 3pm (two hours earlier) and arrive Houston 6:45pm to make a better connection with the SUNSET LIMITED. Eastbound, the SUNSET will leave L.A. at 9pm (instead of 10) and connect with the TEXAS CHIEF, which will leave Houston at 12:20pm, 5hrs later than now. The TEXAS CHIEF will reach Chicago at 3:15pm the next day. The SUNSET will reach New Orleans at 7pm, with a 10min speedup, allowing more time on the town there for thru car travelers to the Northeast.

The Chicago-Milwaukee HIAWATHAS will be re-scheduled to provide more convenient departure and arrival times. The EMPIRE BUILDER will leave Chicago 30mins earlier, and eastbound will leave Minneapolis 30mins later. The tri-weekly NORTH COAST HIAWATHA will also be re-scheduled. There will be no change in the number of trains in the Chicago-Milwaukee corridor.

The cryptic reference in our last issue to the "aforementioned NY-Savannah train" was due to part of our article getting lost on the way to the page. The train in question is the CAROLINA COAST, to be added June 11 to handle local traffic in Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia. It leaves NY at 7:30pm and reaches Savannah 11:15am; leaves Savannah 4:25pm and arrives NY 8:50am. Further information about changes in the New York-Florida and Chicago-Florida runs is found in Steve Farrar's East Coast Report.

In the last issue we listed most of the April 30 changes in the East. Further information on the new NIGHT OWL Boston-Washington overnight train: leaves Boston 10pm, arrives Washington 8:30am; leaves Washington 10:30pm, arrives Boston 8:25am.

Service to Canada on the THEB is rescheduled to assure connections with rescheduled Amtrak trains at Buffalo: leave Toronto 8:50am, arrive Buffalo 12:59pm; leave Buffalo 5:30pm, arrive Toronto 7:35pm.

The NATIONAL LIMITED will be separated entirely from the BROADWAY LTD. The KEYSTONE will be discontinued. The net effect is the elimination of a Harrisburg-Pittsburgh daily roundtrip and the addition of a separate NATIONAL LTD between Washington and Harrisburg, apparently on a less-than-daily frequency to be announced later. Amtrak announced that passengers from Washington would take the 1pm METROLINER to North Philadelphia to catch the NATIONAL, but this plan may be reconsidered since complaints have been made that the change would be illegal, since Washington and St. Louis are end points requiring thru car service. (However, for several months Amtrak has had no thru car service Seattle-San Diego--which are also end points—without any serious repercussions.)

Boston-Washington-Chicago service via PC-C&O-PC will be cut back to run Washington-Chicago only, with no change in schedule or equipment. Amtrak reversed an earlier plan to operate a daylight Newport News-Cincinnati

service. The Main Street stations in both Richmond and Charlottesville will remain in service for the time being.

Amtrak has in mind to run the COAST STARLIGHT to Vancouver, B.C. if the funds now being considered by Congress come thru. No mention was made of international service in Amtrak's press release of April 14. The daily STARLIGHT as of June 11 will leave Portland 4:05pm, arrive Oakland 8:15am, leave Oakland 8:45, arrive L.A. 6:55; it will leave L.A. 10:05am, arrive Oakland 8:20pm, leave Oakland 8:50pm, arrive Portland 1:05. The CITY OF SF will leave Oakland daily at 9:30am and arrive Ogden 3:20am; westbound it leaves Ogden 10:45pm, arrives Oakland 2:55pm. SP indicated the daily service will run at least until Sept. 11, suggesting it might go back to tri-weekly after the summer season.

East Coast Report

by Steve Farrar

Amtrak will celebrate its first anniversary with an all-Amtrak consist on the BROADWAY LIMITED. The train will be displayed at Washington DC May 1 and at New York May 2, and it will run as the westbound BROADWAY LIMITED May 2.

B&O employees and United Transportation Union members in Brunswick, Martinsburg, Cumberland, Oakland, Terra Alta, Grafton and Clarksburg have distributed 30,000 copies of the POTOMAC TURBO schedule on the streets of their hometowns.

Price Commission approved EL's plan to quadruple commuter fares between Youngstown and Cleveland. EL says this is still half the cost of driving, and that its riders will return to the train after a drop in the first two months of the higher fares.

Southern Railway heavyweight coaches on trains 7-8 have been overhauled and given a fresh coat of olive drab paint. The lettering "Southern" includes a serif, in the style of 30 years ago, instead of plain lettering SR has used in recent times.

Amtrak has arranged for its trains to be included this year in Cook's Continental Timetable, an indication that it is actively seeking the international travel market.

"Free Wheels" is the name Amtrak has given its plan for week-long free rental cars for train travelers to Florida from Chicago or the Northeast (see RTN's report last issue). A new 6-page brochure (see cover reproduced here) details the service. With 3 full fares Amtrak offers a 1972 Maverick or similar-size car;

with 4 fares a Ford Torino or similar larger car is offered. The cars can be picked up or returned in any of 7 Florida cities: Orlando, Tampa, St. Petersburg, West Palm Beach, Ft. Lauderdale, Hollywood, or Miami.

More information on those Western Pacific CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR cars that went to Mexico comes from reader J. A. Easton. Of the 9 cars sold, 4 sleepers (#864-867) went to National Railways of Mexico. The rest went to Ferrocarril Del Pacifico.

DOES AUTO-TRAIN REALLY EXIST?

Dear Jim:

Enclosed are photos of the last northbound FLORIDA SPECIAL arriving Broad St. Station, Richmond, Sunday April 16.

Doug Ellis and I and our dates arrived Broad St. about 8:15am intent on photographing the SPECIAL arriving Broad St. at 8:35 and the AUTO-TRAIN arriving Acca Yard at 9:35. About 8:30 the SPECIAL was expected at 9:05 and the AUTO-TRAIN was reported standing still being inspected at Emporia, Va. About 9 the SPECIAL was expected at 9:50; no report on AUTO-TRAIN. At 9:40 we learned that the SPECIAL was still expected at 9:50, but that AUTO-TRAIN was ahead of it!

The intention was for Doug to take all the pictures with his real camera. He and his date immediately drove 1½ miles to SCL main to get both trains. My date and I stayed at Broad St. armed with only an Instamatic. Unfortunately Doug missed both trains apparently by seconds, and AUTO-TRAIN was then hidden in the yards. But they stayed by the main for 1hr expecting the arrivals any second, thus missing the SPECIAL's departure too.

The SPECIAL stayed at Broad St. over ½hr because the lead E unit's train control was not functional. The 4 E's were run around the loop to be wyed to put the rear E in the lead. This is a fairly frequent cause of delays northbound at Richmond. RF&P uses t.c. even tho their speed was cut from 80 to 70 after #76 derailed 2-3 years ago. SCL cut out t.c. 3-4 years ago when they cut speed from 90 to 79.

The Amtrak-painted loco was listed as the lead unit, but a 4th SCL E had been added ahead of it somewhere. After looping, the Amtrak was the 3rd unit.

We are still bound and determined to get a picture series of the whole AUTO-TRAIN arriving Richmond northbound. Don't know if the girls will put up with a third early-morning trip to Richmond. They are beginning to wonder if the AUTO-TRAIN exists. Nevertheless, it will be done soon.

Steve Farrar

(Ed. Note: Rail photographers, does this sound familiar? Next issue we'll get a look at Steve's Instamatic photo(s) of the last FLORIDA SPECIAL.)

SILVER STAR will undergo an unfortunate schedule change April 30. It will leave Miami at 12:15pm instead of 7:10pm, closely duplicating the SILVER METEOR's schedule. As the FLORIDIAN will continue to run in the STAR south of Jacksonville, it too is a victim of the schedule change. It will arrive Chicago 6am the second morning, which is a 3hr 25min schedule deterioration on top of the 2½hr slowdown of Jan. 23. Several ticket agents we have talked with are infuriated over the STAR schedule.

SILVER METEOR and CHAMPION will be consolidated between New York and Jacksonville, causing about a 1hr slowdown. Train will leave New York 2:40pm, arriving St. Petersburg 4:05pm and Miami 4:50pm. Leave Miami 9:10am, St. Pete. 9:20, arrive New York 11:12am. These schedule changes are effective June 11.

The CAROLINA COAST will be added June 11—in essence a resurrected CHICKENBONE SPECIAL (see RTN, Jan. 17) on a faster schedule and with better cars. Consist will include a sleeper and a ranch-type diner. Lv New York 7:30pm, Ar Savannah 11:15am. Lv Savannah 4:25pm, Ar New York 8:50am. Runs via Charleston. The net effect of the above changes is the elimination of one Savannah-Jacksonville roundtrip. Incidentally, the METEOR-CHAMPION will run via Thalmann, GA, over the old Seaboard, but via Charleston (former ACL) north of Savannah.

COST OF FREE WHEELS PLAN FOR EACH OF 3 OR 4 PEOPLE

To Miami From	30-Day Round-trip Coach Excursion	6-Months Round-trip Coach	6-Months Round-trip First Class*	Reservations Toll-free Number
Minneapolis	$135.58	$149.30	$204.80	(612) 333-0124 (612) 332-3441
Milwaukee	108.48	122.20	170.30	(414) 271-6150
Detroit	133.08	146.80	193.30	(313) 965-7070
Chicago	100.58	114.30	160.80	(312) 786-1311
Indianapolis	100.58	114.30	160.80	(317) 267-5841
Buffalo	142.18	155.35	206.60	(716) [illegible] 6800
Rochester	135.18	148.35	199.80	(716) 325-2868
Syracuse	126.68	139.85	191.10	(315) 475-5136
Utica	121.88	134.85	186.10	(315) 732-3131
Schenectady	112.68	125.85	177.10	(518) 462-3351
Albany	111.68	124.85	176.10	(518) 462-3351
Boston	123.98	137.15	196.90	(617) 482-6800 (617) 542-2112
Hartford	110.98	124.15	179.10	(203) 525-9504
New Haven	106.02	119.19	172.98	(203) 624-0111
New York	96.88	109.85	161.10	(212) 736-2000 (212) 246-7380
Newark	96.88	109.85	161.10	(201) 589-4510
Philadelphia	96.88	109.85	161.10	(215) 564-5370 (215) 382-3030

EASTERN EXCURSIONS: Reading Rambles will run again May 6-7 Philadelphia-Harrisburg behind 2102... The Royal Blue Line lives! On Memorial Day weekend Reading steamer 2102 will haul a railfan special from Newark/Elizabeth to Washington via CNJ-RDG-B&O... The Washington chapter of NRHS sold out their April 22 B&O RDC special to Harpers Ferry and is planning another run a month later... The Old Dominion Chapter (Richmond) plans a number of excursions, all non-Amtrak: 2 RF&P "boattrains" to Mount Vernon Memorial Day weekend with RF&P freight power and former B&O coaches; an RF&P-B&O Harpers Ferry special on July 4; Southern steam special to Keysville, VA, in late summer; and 4 Autumn Leaf Specials via C&O in October... Philadelphia chapter will run an excursion May 21 on Reading, from Reading to Shamokin, PA, using two of Reading's 3 remaining FP7A's and 6 air-conditioned coaches. This will be the first passenger train over the trackage in 8 years, the route of the KING COAL EXPRESS...

SOUTHERN STEAM MOVES AND EXCURSIONS: May 6 & 7, Sheffield, AL, to Corinth MS (roundtrip ea. day, by No. Ala. Chapter NRHS); May 27, Birmingham AL to Columbus GA; May 28, Columbus GA to Valdosta GA; May 29, Valdosta GA to Jacksonville FL; June 3 & 4, Jacksonville FL to Valdosta GA (roundtrip ea. day); June 10, Valdosta GA to Macon GA; June 11, Macon GA to Augusta GA; June 17, Augusta GA to Savannah GA and return; July 1, double header, Georgia Peach Special, Atlanta GA to Macon GA and return. (All 1-way trips unless indicated.)

MISCELLANY: Amtrak has bought 51 diesel engines... 3 Amtrak-painted diesels were in service on the FLORIDA SPECIAL in April... Amtrak has consolidated 8 dining car commissaries into 4 in its first year...

Amtrak

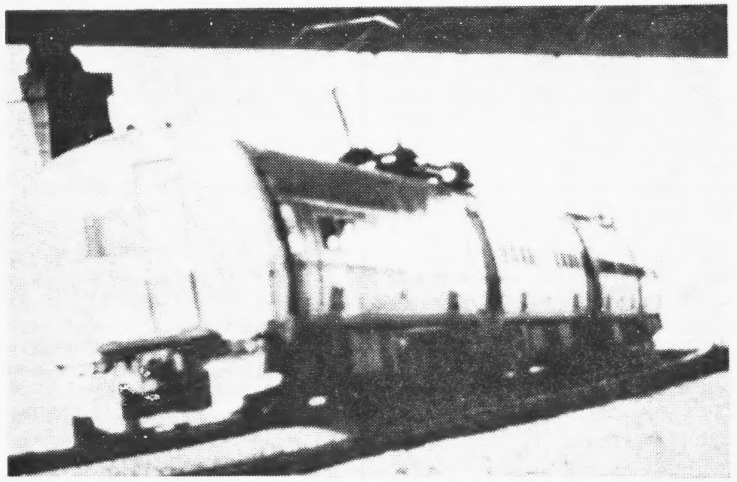
QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

"Many ideas about railroad travel will soon be out-of-date. Because most of them are based on conditions of the past. Our goal at Amtrak is to improve these conditions—to pull the entire rail transportation system into efficient working order. To increase comfort and convenience. To make this traditional type of service meet the needs of our contemporary lifestyle."

—From Amtrak's brochure, "The Florida Trains"

Northeast Corridor 1972

by Edwin P. Patton



Amtrak train 109, a 4-car southbound METROLINER, leaves Baltimore. Photo by Doug Ellis.

On March 17th I had the opportunity to visit the so-called Northeast Corridor. I have followed closely the ups and downs of this rail line since the 1940's when I can remember first riding it. Living in Philadelphia, with relatives scattered along the line in the late 40's and early 50's, then attending college in Charlottesville, Va., for the period 1952-1957, provided many chances to witness the efficiency of GG-1's, the roller coaster effect of P-70 coaches, the joy of new Budd CONGRESSIONAL coaches and coffee shoppes, and the intimidation (by regular trains) of riding the late, low center of gravity KEYSTONE.

This was a short roundtrip, Washington to Baltimore, but one could feel how things were going by spending an hour or so riding the GEORGE WASHINGTON northbound and a METROLINER southbound. I was interested particularly in how conventional equipment reacted to the roadbed that had been refurbished to allow METRO-type operations.

Washington Union Station presented a favorable impression, with certain exceptions. The main waiting room was clean and the ticket agent who assisted me was helpful, friendly, and capable. The airline-type train bulletin boards located all over the premises were plus marks also. Offsetting this was the peeling paint in the men's room and the "temporarily" closed restaurant and bar. The train signs used in the main concourse are a great improvement over their predecessors. The transparent signs, with the easy to read names and Amtrak emblem, present a much more "with it" image than the old solid metal, painted ones that one had to read by the low voltage bulbs that sadly tried to illuminate them.

The GEORGE WASHINGTON was scheduled to leave on time, the connecting train from Chicago arriving as scheduled now that its timecard had been padded. To a UP sleeper, C&O diner, and SP coach, had been added an assortment of 9 coaches, most Penn Central Budds, but including RF&P and Illinois Central cars. The seats in my coach had no paper headrests and some of the foot rests were missing.

Edwin P. Patton is Assistant Professor of Transportation at the University of Tennessee and a columnist for Passenger Train Journal.

The car had been swept out but what it obviously needed were new seat covers and a thorough cleaning.

The windows were clear plastic and a bit hard to see thru compared to glass. But plastic reacts better than glass to rocks and bullets and other missiles sometimes encountered by the trains, courtesy of the "rockers," and I was glad to see it. The last plastic PC window I'd seen was a tinted one in a P-70 coach. The window was all right in this car; it was just that part of the car under the window sill had rusted out, and as the train rolled along one could look thru the hole and see the ground whipping by. A wad of paper stuffed in the hole had been ineffective at shutting off the resulting air-conditioning effect.

Women's Lib is working in the Northeast. As I remember, men used to help members of the fairer sex put their baggage up in the luggage racks. This trip, only 3 of us assisted in this chore. First, a redcap helped his customer after telling her what a hurry he was in and why couldn't she pay him faster. Then an elderly woman almost fell over a military school student and he, having "got the word," helped her with her bag. Almost embarrassed, I helped 3 women with their heavier belongings, and once almost lost my seat to a man doing it. The women were appreciative—be thankful for small favors.

Altho the car was a no-smoking car with illuminated signs at both ends of the passenger compartment, an attractive coed, going to Trenton she told me when I helped with her suitcase, soon lit up and it was the signal for everybody. Soon I couldn't see the signs for the smoke. Once returning to my seat I spotted a patron having an invigorating snort of hootch from a pint bottle. Women's Liberation notwithstanding, some things don't change in the Northeast.

We left on time and the train gathered speed as we passed the ex-coach yards where now a subway is being built. A fleeting glimpse of the adjoining engine terminal revealed Southern's repainted E's, several RF&P and SCL units, plus the DOT experimental Budd cars that set speed records a few years back, and, finally, the "Potomac" TURBO, sitting sans clamshell doors at one end, the result of a grade crossing confrontation with a pickup truck earlier in the day.

Now it was GG-1 time and we were speeding thru the Washington suburbs just the way these engines have done so effectively for the last 3-plus decades. The ride was indeed excellent. I don't know what speed we were doing; the schedule called for 40 miles in 41 minutes. However, with slow running in D.C. and Baltimore, I estimated conservatively 80mph, possibly 85 in spots. What was the best engine ever built? Everybody has his own answer but, considering longevity, the "G's" must rank high on the list.

The most exciting moment of the ride was passing a southbound METROLINER. With no warning there was a strong TH-WUMP as the two trains passed on adjoining tracks. It was a good test for the plastic windows, and I thought I'd lose mine. The episode lasted perhaps two seconds and when it ended I heard several faint "whews" go up and down the car. Evidently I wasn't the only one who had been startled.

The junk pollution along the way is awful, especially in the Baltimore suburbs. A clean-up campaign is in order, with our supposed national concern about such things. Perhaps Amtrak should sponsor such a drive. The right of way was exceptionally revolting, with what appeared to be years of garbage and trash strewn along it. Maybe I was just forgetting my earlier rides along the line.

We arrived Baltimore and a relatively noisy bunch of youngsters gathered at a car entrance. There were other open doors but they seemed to want to use this one. As I walked toward the front of the train to watch it depart I heard suddenly: "Hey, you kids, let's go, let's go, or I leave without you! I've got a train to run!" Whereupon everybody suddenly was on the train and it was quietly pulling out. Patronage was good. All the window and most of the aisle seats were filled. The diner also appeared packed. I began to remember days before Interstate highways and jet shuttles.

When I went to get my single, small bag a station "visitor" was looking it over closely, studying the name on the identification tag. "This yours?" he asked as I rushed up. I wasn't too polite as I grabbed the bag and left. Amtrak doesn't need these people hanging around its facilities but, like everything else in this country in 1972, I'm sure the Courts wouldn't allow the Corporation to do anything effective to rid itself of such parasites. I recalled being assured by a conductor in Chicago's Union Station in 1967 that if I left my bag unguarded it would be stolen in less than 60 seconds.

Baltimore station was old but it was clean. Union News stands haven't changed. One felt honored to have the attendant take your money for a candy bar or newspaper. After all, looking at her expression, she might have hit you with something for disturbing whatever it was she wasn't doing at the time.

A few minutes later the METROLINER for Washington pulled in. One doesn't need reservations from Baltimore to Washington on the METRO, you just get on. But you get socked the $2.00 service charge regardless, making METRO fare $4.50 compared to the regular coach's $2.50 for the 40-mile ride. The service charge means you're paying over 11 cents a mile between these two points; however, the rate is even higher between cities closer together, like Philadelphia-Wilmington. Amtrak extracts its pound of flesh if you want to savor this country's fastest passenger train service over only a limited distance.

I don't think I'm alone whan I admit I'm quite taken with the METROLINERS. They lurch and jerk, sometimes uncomfortably, but they provide a hint of what truly high speed ground transport can be like. Riding back to Washington I took some movies from the rear vestibule, resting my elbow on the controls to try to capture the feel of the train's speed and ride. The result looks like the photographer was a victim of St. Vitus' Dance, with the catenary poles bouncing around like tooth picks on a vibrator. But the average patron doesn't ride the vestibule and all the passengers I saw looked comfortable and seemed to be enjoying the ride.

On this trip I saw my first female Amtrak train representative, a voluptuous blonde who would have qualified for Hugh Hefner's center spread but instead sported a red jacket, blue skirt, and white sweater. For part of the run she was taught the science of picking up ticket stubs; "Red means Philly, blue means..." and so it went. "Philly," she'd repeat, but it sounded like it might take her a while. For this woman to be picking up stubs, as an economist would say, represented a misallocation of scarce resources.

The conductor who was doing the instructing had some interesting insights, when his student had resumed her other duties. METROLINERS, he argued, were just glorified MU cars. Give him a "G," an engineer who knew what he was doing, nine good cars, and he'd match a METRO every time. It all depended on the engineer. And while the Amtrak timetable advertised a New York-Washington 2:59 transit time, the PC employees timetable allowed several minutes more for the same run. A 3-hour run was exceptional, he said. - This trip we arrived 15 minutes off the advertised.

At Washington, a northbound METROLINER was filling up rapidly and there was a great deal of hustle and bustle. Could this be a railroad station in 1972? It was, but it also was a Friday at 3:45pm, and if Amtrak couldn't lure travelers to its corridor trains at this time, it indeed was in trouble. Evidently the Corporation can't handle the demand for some of its services. When I had tried to get METRO reservations the night before, the northbound 1, 4, and 5pm trains were sold out. I thought of people calling all day Friday for space and being turned down. An extra set of cars might successfully have won some travelers from the air shuttle.

In thinking back over the brief excursion, I could remember seeing some encouraging signs. Some of the amenities Amtrak patrons have been promised were very much in evidence. Besides the train representative, the ticket sellers and several operating personnel I talked with were pleasant and relatively productive. The exception to this was the METRO snack bar operator, who reflected the traditional PC surliness.

In conclusion, though, merely putting Amtrak placards on the METRO cars and staffing the trains with good looking women will not guarantee a future for the National Railroad Passenger Corporation. METROS, together with the TURBO, represent a start, but services like them must become the rule rather than the exception if Amtrak is to succeed. Whether we're willing to spend enough money to guarantee such a service remains to be seen.

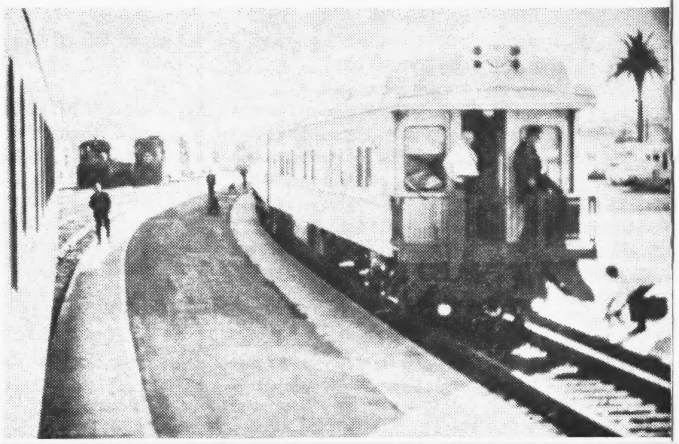
Meanwhile, if you can arrange it, you should experience a ride in the 1972 Northeast Corridor. It's fun!

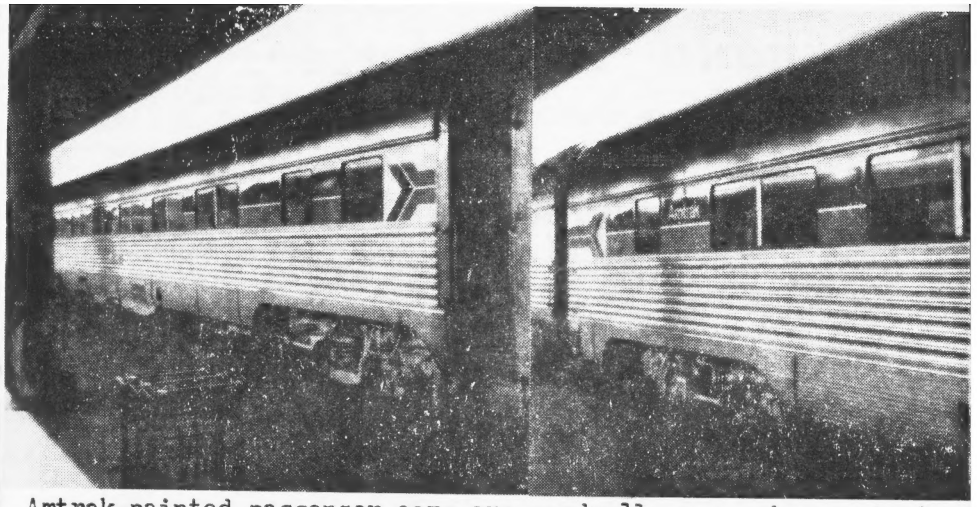
PHOTO GALLERY

A collection of photos from East, West, and in-between reflects the variety in passenger railroading during Amtrak's first year

Amtrak train 98, the GEORGE WASHINGTON connection to Newport News, zips thru Lee Hall, Va. in March, drawn by a pair of C&O Geeps. Consist includes a dome coach. Frozen in time in the lens of East Coast Photographer Doug Ellis. Until last November the numbers, 98 & 99, of these Charlottesville-Newport News trains belonged to the two trains in the photo below. Right is the COAST STARLIGHT/DAYLIGHT, left is the northbound COAST DAYLIGHT, seen passing in the San Luis Obispo station.

An SP office car is bringing up the rear of #12. The Porter who appears to be bowing at far right is actually placing a step box for SP brass to alight. Photographed last Nov. 16 by George Hyko.





Amtrak-painted passenger cars are gradually appearing on trains across the nation. Amtrak car 4878, a Santa Fe low-level coach, is seen above on a SAN DIEGAN on March 29. Left photo shows the vestibule end of the car, and the right the opposite end. Broad red and blue and a narrow white stripe run the length of the car in the window area. Photos by Paul Rayton.

A pair of sleek silver streamliners side by side in Chicago's Union Station last October. Right, SUPER CHIEF/EL CAPITAN disgorges passengers as the DENVER ZEPHYR (left) loads. This unscheduled conjunction of Amtrak giants was brought about by an unusual late arrival of the SUPER. Photo by Message Media.

A string of idle Union Pacific domes sits forlornly behind barbed wire in Los Angeles as Amtrak turns down excursion money and postpones added regular service because of equipment shortages. There are rumors that Amtrak, if it had enough money, would buy the cars. Amtrak is under-funded primarily because of the action of the shadowy Office of Management and the Budget, which cut Amtrak's funds deeply.

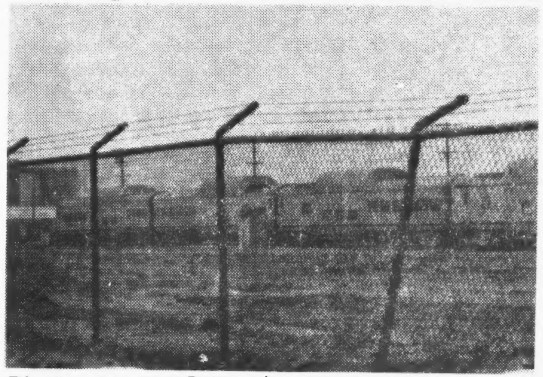


Photo by Paul Rayton.

Canada news letter

EDMONTON OPPOSES TRAIN DISCONTINUANCES

Canadian National Railway operates a "Dayliner" Budd car between the city of Edmonton and Grand Centre, Alberta. We couldn't find it in our Official Guides, and CN would probably prefer it that way. They've maintained a low profile for the little train, and now are asking permission to drop it altogether.

At hearings held March 23 to consider the request, the city of Edmonton presented a forceful, well-reasoned argument to the Canadian Transport Commission urging that the train not only be continued, but that it be extended to the Armed Forces Base at Cold Lake, upgraded and promoted. City officials went even farther than this—they urged the CTC to look into the possibility of establishing an Amtrak-like organization to run passenger trains in Canada in order to "change the gloomy circumstances under which the railways conduct the service."

The city's brief is worthy of close attention not only for the facts it brings about this particular case but also for a number of important points it makes about rail travel that are relevant to the situation in the United States as well as to Canada.

Let us quote Edmonton's arguments: "For many years, the public has lived with the railways' bias against passenger train service. This has apparently come from the fact that most railway managements are freight-oriented rather than passenger-oriented. And because no man can serve two masters, railways have opted to the wholesale-type job of freight distribution rather than the retail-type job of merchandising passenger services.

"Because of the great powers of the railways, they are able to change the social and political climate of the environment in which they do business. By constantly de-emphasizing their passenger train services, the railways have convinced a portion of the public that train service is old-fashioned, antiquated and undependable.

"This anti-passenger train propaganda has helped to reduce rail passenger patronage well below what such patronage would be given reasonable advertising and promotion such as done by department stores, soap companies, airlines and travel agencies.

"Because of the high pollution factors of alternative modes of travel such as airplane and highway, many concerned citizens are now beginning to realize what damage has been done to our society by the anti-passenger train biases of the railway corporations.

"It is our opinion that the 'fashionability crisis' surrounding train travel has helped to create much pollution and also excessive public spending in alternative travel modes... For many, many years enormous sums of public tax monies have been spent to encourage people to travel by air or by highway. Almost no public monies have been spent anywhere to encourage our citizens to travel by train. We feel that we must begin reversing such trends...

"It is axiomatic in our highly developed industrial society that almost all transportation facilities lose money. Our extensive public highway systems have been built at enormous expense over the years. These highways have not, and do not, contribute to a return on invested capital. Nor do the highways pay local property taxes. Indeed, highways cost a great deal each year to operate, maintain and police.

"The airport system in Canada is an enormous money-loser, and consumes a large part of the federal transportation budget each year. It is fully apparent, with public investment in such projects as the Ste. Scholastique Airport (near Montreal) reaching one BILLION dollars, that the airline user pays only a small percentage of the total costs of operating and maintaining the national system of airways.

"In addition, the St. Lawrence Seaway loses money. The icebreakers lose money. The lighthouses lose money. And also the Coast Guard facilities, installations and vessels.

"And yet none of the above investments and operating losses associated with the various modes of transportation ever receives much public criticism.

"It is indeed strange, then, to behold the vocal criticism of rail passenger services from the railway companies. The Canadian railway companies have been given enormous amounts of public aid over the years in land grants and concessions so that the Canadian nation could be tied together socially, culturally and economically.

"It is even more strange to note that decisions on whether or not to continue rail passenger service seem to be made only on dollars and cents evaluation; whereas if such evaluations were applied to all other forms of transportation, almost all would be closed immediately." (Emphasis added.)

Edmonton pointed to the "very pronounced" public outcry against expanded highway systems, naming the damages due to despoiling of landscape, destruction of park, recreational and scenic areas, air pollution, noise pollution, and high death rate on the highways. These factors make highways "increasingly unsuitable in the political and economic context."

Some advantages of rail service were enumerated: it is economical to operate (trains have "declining unit costs"; unlike buses or airplanes it is not necessary to add a full staff each time the vehicle capacity is exceeded—extra cars can be added to existing trains); less capital investment is needed since facilities already exist and can carry additional traffic, pollution from trains is low, they are safer than highways, more comfortable and more dependable in bad weather.

Then—an especially interesting idea: "Usually as more people use train service, the train service gets better. In contrast, as more people use highways, highway congestion becomes worse and highway speeds drop while accident dangers and pollution problems increase."

In suggesting an Amtrak type of operation for Canada's passenger trains, the city pointed to the "unimaginative and miserly" management of present railway officials. Edmonton suggested the name "Rail Canada" for such a "national passenger railroad." Its executives would "evaluate their successes only on their ability to attract large numbers of passengers to their train services." Executives might be drawn from highway department staffs, since the successful GO transit commuter train system in Toronto did this, and since highway executives "seem to have the ability to raise large amounts of public funds for their agencies" and "do not seem to have any qualms about spending their monies to meet 'need' and 'demand' for facilities, regardless of whether or not their previous expenditures have helped to create that demand."

In a separate action, the city of Edmonton also opposed the proposal by Northern Alberta Railways to drop its overnight train between Edmonton and Dawson Creek in Northeast British Columbia. NAR is jointly owned by Canadian National and Canadian Pacific.

CANADIAN NEWS BRIEFS

CN is attempting to replace all dining cars on its trains with low-cost airline-type food service. The Montreal-Toronto and Ottawa-Toronto runs will lose their diners June 1. Only the transcontinental and Montreal-Maritimes runs will still have diners by next year... After the heavy snows of last winter, CN and CP want to connect their B.C. lines west of Kamloops with the British Columbia Railway (formerly the PGE, but renamed April 1) which has an easier route west of the Fraser River Canyon... Nine high school students are asking the government for an $80,000 loan to start a commuter train service north of Toronto, renovating stations and hiring a 6-car CN train and crew... Canadian government seems willing to put up funds to modify the TurboTrain equipment formerly on the Montreal-Toronto route... Newfoundland has asked to convert its narrow-gauge lines to standard gauge, but Transport Minister Don Jamieson feels building new roads would be preferable... CN and CP claim losses of $15 million a year on the Maritimes trains, and the CTC is asking the public for suggestions for improving rail services there, after deciding they must be retained in the public interest... CN is asking for sleeping car fare increases of 5 to 9% effective June 1... Next year is CN's 50th anniversary, and special celebration plans are underway...

Mixed Train of Thoughts

A SECTION to Chicago on the CITY OF SF, anyone? Two former GN sleepers, the "Bad Ax River" and the "Milk River," left Oakland on that train Apr. 20 & 22 respectively, and SP officials, inadvertently reading outdated Pullman handbooks, took the cars' configurations as 4 section/7 duplex rmt/3 bdrm/1 cmpt and sold some berths. But the cars had been rebuilt in 1963, replacing the sections with bedrooms, and the purchasers of berths found themselves with a bonus..... LAST WORD on the Detroit service from the 20th C. RR Club: the "Bay" cars do have parlor service, using the bedrooms of the sleeper-lounges. It's been in effect at least 1½ months. The Club also tells us the PC track Chicago-Detroit is not too great; hard for "patrons to remain in their seats without getting white knuckles from gripping the arm rests"..... NORTH COAST HIAWATHA item from last issue is hereby corrected by reader Michael Blaszak: "It is true that the CZ observation no longer operates east of Minneapolis & that the rear has either Silver Veranda (1956 Budd dome-parlor-obs from the Denver Zephyr) or Appekunny Mountain, 1951 GN lounge-obs used as a parlor. West of Minneapolis a CZ obs is added, but no space sold; it is used as a dorm. Certainly these are the plushiest dorms around, with shower & all"....
ORANGE COUNTY Transit District Apr. 17 adopted a proposal to negotiate with Amtrak to reschedule trains on SAN DIEGAN route to allow commuting: leave San Diego 5:45am, reach L.A. 8:30am; leave L.A. 5:30pm, arrive San Diego about 8:15.....

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LONG HAUL automobile have any future? was question RTN staffers were kicking around recently. Conclusion: long distance highway travel too dehumanizing; cars impossible in urban areas; therefore they may have some place in corridor travel of 100-200 miles, provided they don't enter any cities.....
RIO VISTA Junction excursion advertised in RTN Mar. 20 was pretty full, tho it had unexpected last-minute setback: Western Pacific, owners of Sacramento Northern tracks between Fairfield & Rio Vista refused their use after initial okay, so train ran all the way to Sacramento and buses backtracked (is that the right word?) to the museum location. Return train left from Fairfield...
AUTOMAT CARS--the last 3 of them from the SUNSET LTD--all deadheaded into Oakland Apr. 18 on COAST DAYLIGHT, to go hopefully to their last resting place. (Maybe they could be rebuilt into sleepers again?)..... SANTA FE lunch counter cars--3 of them (#1569, 1571, 1577)--now in use on COAST DAYLIGHT replacing recently-used SP hamburger grill cars..... SUNSET LIMITED about 6 hrs late into San Antonio Apr. 18 due to freight derailment ahead...
AUTO DEATHS have reached "epidemic proportions around the industrialized world," said Transportation Secretary John Volpe while viewing auto test crashes in Arizona this month. Somebody finally noticed!..... NICEST BROCHURE yet from Amtrak, and the best train advertising we've seen in many a day in the U.S. is the recent folder "The Florida Trains," 75,000 copies of which were printed in January. Twelve full-color pages describing all the trains to Florida, with photos of new uniforms and a good picture of Roger Lewis..... METROLINER SERVICE increases of April 30 will use twelve cars originally intended for Phila.-Harrisburg, but stored in yards in Red Lion, Pa. Railroad officials call them the "Red Lion" cars, reports the New York Times. All are in Amtrak paint, and are leased from the Budd Co...

* * *

PRIVATE RAILWAY car-moving issue is being finally resolved. Amtrak's Harold Graham issued a letter April 13 indicating that NRPC will haul privately-owned cars, and outlining the conditions..... SENATE COMMERCE Committee still was fussing with Amtrak's funding bill when we checked April 18. It was expected to be sent soon to the Senate floor, where it would have to wait to be put on the agenda. If Senate approves it, it goes to a joint House-Senate compromise committee to iron out differences in the two bills. Then the resulting bill will have to be approved again by both houses of Congress. The Senate bill differs some from the House version.....
AMTRAK'S PROPOSED route to Montreal is subject of much interest and speculation. One of Amtrak's proposed routings is an overnight run from NY to Springfield, across the B&A (now PC) to Albany, then north on the D&H.....
page 14

EDITORIAL: THE RATE OF HIGHWAY KILLING

RTN received a number of thoughtful comments about the March 20 Auto Deaths supplement. The article was meant to set more people thinking about this tragic problem, not to provide final answers. And RTN readers indeed are concerned and thinking carefully about these matters, as judged by our mail.

One question posed us was why we said nothing about rates of deaths on the highway--for example, deaths per passenger mile. We're glad you asked that question, as the saying goes, because we deliberately omitted talking about rates in order to do a separate editorial on them. We think they're extremely important and deserve the emphasis of a separate article.

We feel that discussions of rates of dying have been used largely in grossly misleading ways. Their proper use is in making comparisons among different modes of transportation. It's meaningful to say that airlines have had X number of deaths per passenger mile compared with X deaths per passenger mile for motor vehicles. Since total mileages of different modes differ, such a comparison tells us the relative safety of each mode.

However, these rates are often used outside such comparative contexts to gloss over and implicitly defend the horrid carnage on our roads. When the head of a major automobile firm told us that death rates on the road are worse in Europe, he was trying to stifle criticism and defend his corporation's atrocious safety record, not do anything meaningful about a very real problem. What does it matter how many actual passenger miles have been traveled when you're faced simply with the glaring fact that 55,000 Americans were killed while out driving last year?

The war in Vietnam has provoked endless criticism and discussion, severely affected the political careers of major governmental leaders, and stimulated widespread changes in our system of priorities for national and international spending. The whole situation has centered around needless killings in Southeast Asia. And yet the number of Americans killed in the entire Vietnam war to date is not more than the number of Americans killed on the highways in 1971 alone! And this is not even considering the hundreds of thousands more who are injured and maimed on American roads each year.

Nobody would accept a justification of the Vietnam war based on the number of Americans killed per soldier-day of fighting, or some other such phony rate-wise comparison. Why are we asked to accept the monstrous fact that a number of innocent people equal to half the population of Berkeley, Calif., was killed in a single year right under our noses while we did little but bandy around rate figures that seem to show that superhighways are relatively less killing than other roads, figures meant to divert attention from the real problem and the real solutions? The barbaric fact that we have 55,000 highway deaths on our hands from 1971 alone and seem blithely unconcerned about it is appalling. This huge tally in blood must be faced up to, rates or no rates. The fact is that we could do something about it, but don't seem to be doing it. The answer is to get as many people as feasible off the highways and provide them with safe, reliable rail transportation.

If only one person died yearly in auto crashes, that person's picture would be in every newspaper, on every TV screen in America. A statue might be erected to him. But because one person's death is repeated 55,000 times in a single year, we astoundingly look the other way. Maybe its a case of information overload. But we've got to face up to it. It will keep getting worse unless we do something now.

BACK ISSUES of RTN are available at 25¢ each. We must ask you to order them separately; we cannot back-date subscriptions due to the clerical expense. All 33 back issues are available with these exceptions: 7 thru 10, 13 thru 15, and no. 21. If out of an issue, we will credit your subscription with an extra issue (if you are a current subscriber) unless you indicate otherwise. Order from Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley, Calif. 94709. Back issues are sent by third class mail.